

NATO build-up in Romania and Moldova directed against Russia

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The drive by the US and EU imperialism to militarily encircle and ultimately dismantle Russia and China is pushing the world closer to a devastating conflagration. The rapid and reckless militarization of Eastern Europe that occurred after the overthrow in 2014 of the Russian-backed government in Kiev, highlights the enormous dangers confronting the population of the region and of the entire world.

The recent activation at the Deveselu airbase in Romania of the first land-based element of the NATO missile defense system has provoked a harsh reaction from Moscow. Notwithstanding the declarations of various NATO officials about countering North Korean or Iranian missiles, the Russians justifiably see it as an attempt to break the nuclear deterrence status quo.

Adm. Vladimir Komoyedov, chairman of the State Duma's defense committee, called the missile system "a direct threat to us", and added "They are moving to the firing line [...] this is not about Iran, but about Russia with its nuclear capabilities."

Russian President Vladimir Putin, quoted by news agencies, said, "This is not a defense system. This is part of a US nuclear strategic potential brought on to a periphery. In this case, Eastern Europe is such a periphery." He then threatened, "Those people taking such decisions must know that until now they have lived calm, fairly well-off and in safety. Now, as these elements of ballistic missile defense are deployed, we are forced to think how to neutralize the emerging threats to the Russian Federation."

The extremely volatile and dangerous nature of the developing situation is exemplified by an article that appeared in the online edition of the *New York Times* on the day the new missile system was inaugurated. The article quoted Russian commentator Konstantin Bogdanov, who said, "The antimissile sites in Eastern

Europe might even accelerate the slippery slope to nuclear war in a crisis. They would inevitably become priority targets in the event of nuclear war, possibly even targets for preventive strikes.

"Countries like Romania that host American antimissile systems might be the only casualties," he wrote, "whereas the United States would then reconcile with Russia 'over the smoking ruins of the East European elements of the missile defense system.'"

Over the past two years, Romania, Poland and the Baltic states have been the scene of almost continuous rounds of military drills by the NATO armed forces. NATO strategists view these countries as a future battleground, and American troops, part of Operation Atlantic Resolve, are ardently feeling out the local terrain and infrastructure in preparation for war.

In addition to the concentration of military hardware and troops that is set to increase in the coming period, Romania is also agitating for the creation of a permanent NATO flotilla to counter Russia in the Black Sea, to be manned mainly by the Black Sea countries of Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. On his visit to Bucharest on the April 21, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko announced his intention to join the Romanian initiative.

In a major escalation of the militarization of Eastern Europe, US and Romanian forces are involved in exercises with Moldovan troops taking place between May 2 and May 20 on the Moldavian side of the border. The exercise, dubbed Dragoon Pioneer, involves around 200 US soldiers and marks the first time in the former Soviet Republic's history that NATO troops have entered the country, in flagrant violation of the Moldovan constitution, which stipulates its neutrality.

Moldova is engaged in an ongoing territorial conflict

with the breakaway Republic of Transnistria, with which it, supported by Romania, fought a brief war in the 1990s. Transnistria enjoys the backing of Russia, which maintains a peacekeeping force of around 1,500 troops on its territory. Russian forces stationed there reacted by staging their own exercises to coincide with the American presence in Moldova. Russian units also took part for the first time in the May 9 Victory Day parade organized by the authorities in Tiraspol, a gesture condemned by Moldova as “harming bilateral relations.”

The presence of the American troops was accompanied by a propaganda campaign aimed at revising the historical role of the Soviet Red Army in the liberation of Europe from the Third Reich. American hardware was displayed in the Moldovan capital of Chisinau on both May 8 and 9, with both Moldovan President Nicolae Timofti and Party of Communists leader Vladimir Voronin stressing the “massive contribution” of the US in defeating Nazi Germany. After the end of the operations in Moldova, the US troops will reenter Romania to join Romanian, British and Moldovan soldiers in the Sarmis 16 military exercises.

The militarization of Romania and the war preparations are carried out by the imperialist powers in collusion with the local elites entirely behind the backs of the population. Nothing resembling a public debate or any mention of the immense dangers posed by these policies has taken place.

Romania was one of the first NATO countries to increase its defense budget to 2 percent of GDP, a measure demanded by the US and adopted last year in a “National Pact” overseen by the country’s president, Klaus Iohannis, and supported by all the bourgeois parties. To support the bloated military spending and comply with EU spending demands, the technocratic Government headed by Dacian Ciolos is supervising further attacks on the livelihoods of workers, including major privatization drives in mining, energy and healthcare.

The drive towards war and the endless austerity measures are growing increasingly incompatible with the thin veneer of parliamentary democracy that was established by the new ruling classes in Eastern Europe after the restoration of capitalism in the 1990s. The admission last year by former Social Democratic

President Ion Iliescu that his administration participated in the CIA torture program, and that it was done without blinking an eye in order to secure the country’s admission to NATO, should serve as a stark warning to the working class as to the criminal character of these ruling oligarchies. A return to the naked dictatorial forms of rule that prevailed before the Second World War is more than a theoretical possibility.



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